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THE TOWER OF NESLE:

OR, THE CHAMBER OF DEATH,

AN HISTORICAL DRAMA IN THREE ACTS,

By **GEORGE ALMAR, Esq.**

Author of *Pedlar's Acre*.

PRINTED FROM THE ACTING COPY

With Remarks, Biographical & Critical,

By D—G.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

A DESCRIPTION of the COSTUME, Cast of the
 CHARACTERS, ENTRANCES and EXITS, RELATIVE
 POSITIONS of the Performers on the Stage, and
 the whole of the STAGE BUSINESS, as now per-
 formed in the MERTROPOLITAN MINOR THEATRES.

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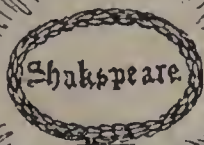
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from

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Mr. R. CRUIKSHANK.



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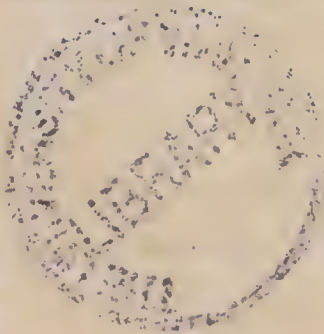
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The Tower of Nesle.

Margaret. Wretched youth! I am thy mother!

Act III. Scene 3.

THE TOWER OF NESLE;

OR, THE CHAMBER OF DEATH :

A HISTORICAL DRAMA,

In Three Acts,

BY GEORGE ALMAR, ESQ.

*Author of The Battle of Sedgemoor, The Cedar Chest, The Charcoal Burner,
Robber of the Rhine, Clerk of Clerkenwell, Fire Raiser, The Shadow,
Pedlar's Acre, The Good-Looking Fellow, Don Quixote,
The Rover's Bride, Lucrece Borgia, &c.*

PRINTED FROM THE ACTING COPY, WITH REMARKS,
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY D.—G.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME,—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS,—
ENTRANCES AND EXITS,—RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE
PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE, AND THE WHOLE
OF THE STAGE BUSINESS,

As performed at the
METROPOLITAN MINOR THEATRES.

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LONDON :

JOHN CUMBERLAND, 2, CUMBERLAND TERRACE,
CAMDEN NEW TOWN.

REMARKS.

The Tower of Nesle.

“A WOMAN killed with kindness” forms the plot of a very fine tragedy written by Thomas Heywood, an ancient poet of the Elizabethan age. Mr. Almar, a comedian and dramatic writer of the present, has taken for his heroine Marguerite de Bourgoyne, who kills, *after* kindness, sundry scores of *gentlemen*, her gallants. We always thought that Catharine of Russia had a mighty happy knack of binding her paramours to secrecy.—Dead men tell no tales; but Catharine, with all her love and murder, was a vestal virgin, a miracle of compassion, compared to this Queen of France and Navarre. How far the conduct of these sister sovereigns may be justified, on the plea of political or philosophical expedience, it might be curious to argue. Doubtless, both ladies were the creatures of circumstances over which they had no control—passive agents in the power of their passions; beset with temptations, and yielding, by fatal necessity, to the last and strongest. We might prove that the end justified the means—that it is possible to serve the devil for God’s sake (do evil that good may arise), on the principle of usefulness and philanthropy! These interesting inquiries belong to *science*—we pretend only to *sense*; on which a certain forgotten poet, *one Pope*, was wont to descant with all the warmth of superstitious reverence and enthusiasm:—

“Something there is more needful than expense,
And something previous e’en to taste—’tis *sense*,—
Good sense, which only is the gift of heaven,
And, though *no science*, fairly worth the seven.”

We speak not to disprove what philosophy hath spoken, we only speak (as did Mark Antony) what *we do know*:—that Catharine, as was said of Elizabeth (“No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope!”), though we may

find it difficult to reconcile our fancy to her as a *wife* or *mistress*, had qualities as a sovereign, though with some considerable exceptions, that are the object of undisputed applause and approbation. That Marguerite de Bourgoyne was a remorseless Amazon, without one redeeming quality, the egress from whose bed chamber was the chamber of death, a certain devoted apartment in the Tower of Nesle, where her gallants were poniarded by hired assassins, and cast out at window into the Seine, down which muddy stream their corpses floated, to the daily terror and amaze of the good citizens of Paris. It is Rousseau's remark, "*Que l'état de reflection est un état contre nature, et que l'homme qui medite est un animal depravé.*" How, then, can we call her majesty *depraved*? since a lady who had so much business on her hands could have little time for *reflection*! If her exceeding beauty made her flatterers exclaim "All the *angels* are not in *heaven*!"—"Tous les diables ne sont pas en enfer" was a saying equally true, so long as Marguerite de Bourgoyne possessed the power of doing mischief.

It may be well to give the locality of this celebrated tower. "Située a l'extrémité occidentale de cet emplacement, à l'angle formé par le cours de la Seine et le fossé de l'ancienne de Philippe. Auguste, la *Porte de Nesle*, espèce de Bastille qui existait encore sous le règne de Louis XIV., se composait d'un édifice flanqué de deux tours rondes entre lesquelles était la porte de la ville. Ce fut par cette porte que Henri IV. pénétra dans Paris, après avoir assiégé ce côté de la ville, en 1589." A more convenient place could not have been selected for these black and midnight murders than this same Tower of Nesle! It was customary, when a handsome stranger appeared in public, for one of the Queen's purveyors, a lady veiled, to wait upon him with an assignation to meet the *beautiful unknown* not a hundred miles from the tower in question. The bait took; and the booby who was insane enough to swallow it, was *in the Seine* on the following morn, with twenty mortal gashes on his head. At an early age the Princess could exclaim "*Nec scio quid sit amor!*" She moreover exhibited extraordinary symptoms of ferocity in her *tender* years. Her first freak was with a young page, of which two sweet pledges were the result. The good Duke Robert, dreading this rapid propagation of the

blood royal, and unwilling to swamp the peerage by such an illegitimate succession, resolved to try if the austerities of a convent would not cool the lady's hot blood. But her highness's temperament being no ways inclined to penance and mortification, she hinted to her pretty page that he wore a dagger, that her father slept in a certain chamber, and that, if his dagger and the duke's blood should chance to become better acquainted, they might continue their pranks without danger of molestation or punishment. The duke is assassinated; the page richly rewarded, and sent upon his travels; the infants are confided to the care of Orsini, host of the White Lamb, with an order to despatch them, with all speed, after their murdered grandsire; and Marguerite mounts the throne of France as Queen Consort of Louis the Tenth. Simple folks might naturally suppose that her sacred majesty had supped full with horrors. But, Lord bless us! she has barely breakfasted. Her grand master of the ceremonies is the said Orsini, a ruffian with a bald scalp and a Tyburn face. He is Lord High Steward of the Chamber of Death; the gentlemen in waiting are, Landri, a whiskered tapster, and Richarde and Jehan, cut-throats and common stabbers. King Louis being absent on a tour, his queen resolves to devote the solitary interval to her especial recreation. Gaultier D'Aulnay, a young officer of the guards, is taken into high favour, and buzzes round the presence with other court coxcombs, who alternately participate in the like honour. Two strangers arrive at Orsini's Hotel—Philip D'Aulnay, brother of Gaultier; and Buridan, a captain in the Italian army, a soldier of fortune. They are hardly seated, ere a veiled lady enters with an assignation for the latter, couched in similar terms to one that Philip had received on his way to the White Lamb. Both attend, together with a *third*—for the queen had considerably invited her two maids of honour (princesses!) to divert their melancholy after the imperial fashion. Philip and Buridan accidentally meet in the chamber of death,—a most lugubrious apartment! Groans are heard, and the plashing of something heavy into the water—'tis the unknown paramour meeting his inevitable doom! They find, too late, they are betrayed. Escape seems hopeless; yet should *one* chance to escape, the survivor swears to avenge the murder of his comrade. On a tablet which Philip presents to

Buridan, he inscribes, in characters of blood, that he dies the victim of * * * ; Buridan, who prompts him, is to fill up the *blank*, when his friend's fate is finally sealed ; nor has he long to wait, for Philip D'Aulnay is duly despatched to his brother gallants ; when Buridan fills up the blank with "Marguerite de Bourgoyne !" and, with the connivance of the ruffian tapster, escapes from the tower. The queen, according to custom, receives the daily return of killed and wounded, and is sorely perplexed to find that the Seine had cast up only *two* bodies when her royal mandate had provided for *three* ! The enigma is soon solved by the apparition of the Italian captain ; who, having darkly hinted to Gualtier that he knows more about his brother's death than he then cared to communicate, and having delivered to him the tablets, with a strict injunction not to open them until a certain time, boldly enters her majesty's presence, and, by dint of accusations and threats, procures the arrest of the prime minister, and the reversion of his place. But the captain gets a Rowland for his Oliver ; for Marguerite, knowing her absolute dominion over the fond and infatuated Gaultier, affects to be jealous—to believe that the tablets are love-tokens from the ladies of her court, and, discharging a full broadside from the battery of her charms, induces him to gratify her curiosity, and quiet her suspicions, by delivering them up. The Queen makes good use of her temporary possession, tears out the fatal leaf whereon is inscribed the evidence of her guilt, returns the tablets to Gaultier, with an acknowledgment that she had unjustly suspected him, lays his brother's murder to the charge of Buridan, and issues an order for *his* arrest in turn. The order is put in force, and the captain in prison ; whither the Queen repairs to enjoy her triumph. But the Italian has two strings to his bow. He had previously directed Landri to a certain stone in the floor of his chamber, under which is deposited a casket containing the history of the royal amour and its consequences. This, in the event of his execution, Landri is instructed to deliver into the hands of King Louis, at his entry, on the morrow, into his good city of Paris. This arrangement he communicates to the Queen, and, throwing off his incognito, appears before her as her once pretty page, and partner in guilt. What can satiate his ambition ? Will riches, rank, and unlimited sway, bind him

to secrecy? He succeeds to the office of minister, turns one courtier adrift, cashiers another, and insists on the honourable banishment of the prime favourite, Gaultier D'Alunay. The Queen demurs; and Buridan, to cut short the argument, secretly has recourse to the old sovereign remedy, *the Tower of Nesle*. A question arises as to the fate of the children, when it appears that they had been spared by the compunction of their intended assassins, though, in the end, they were not destined to escape the fury of their parents. Gaultier is butchered, before Buridan can rush forward to save him; for, horrible discovery! the two children thus miraculously preserved in their infancy, are *Gaultier* and *Philip D'Aulnay*.

This terrible drama is from the French of Galliardet. It is most powerfully represented at the Surrey Theatre. The Buridan of Mr. G. Bennett is a very original and striking performance; something, perhaps, out of nature, but the character passes nature's bounds, so there is nothing to complain of. The Gaultier D'Aulnay of Osbaldiston was distinguished by just declamation and good sense; and Mrs. W. West played the difficult and dangerous part of Marguerite de Bourgoyne with propriety and vigour. The piece was eminently successful; the manager having (as a wag remarked), by producing this *tower*, hit the right *nail* on the head.

 D—G.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Conductors of this work print no plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from personal observations, during the most recent performances.

EXITS and ENTRANCES.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; F. *the Flat, or Scene running across the back of the Stage*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; C. D. *Centre Door*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R. R.C. C. L.C. L.

* * * The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

Costume.

BURIDAN.—*First dress:* Armour—crimson shirt—military bonnet and small feather. *Second dress:* Bohemian gipsy dress—brown gown—beard—sandals.

GAULTIER D'AULNAY.—Orange spangled shirt—black velvet cloak, embroidered with silver—white pantaloons—russet boots—white hat and feathers.

LOUIS OF FRANCE.—White satin shirt, embroidered—light blue robe, embroidered with fleur-de-lis—white silk pantaloons—shoes—crown.

MARIGNY.—Black shape—hat and plumes.

PHILIP D'AULNAY.—Brown shirt, red and button trimmings—red pantaloons—shoes—brown hat—white feathers.

SAVOISY.—Crimson spangled shape—white shoes—hat and feathers.

SIEUR ROUAL.—Pink shirt, gold and black trimming—peuce-coloured cloak—black hat—white feather.

COURTIERS.—Ibid.

ORSINI.—Brown shirt—pantaloons—russet shoes.

LANDRI.—Black tab jacket—skin vest—striped shirt—green cap—flesh-coloured pantaloons—russet boots.

RICHARDE.—French citizen's dress.

JEHAN.—Ibid.

QUEEN MARGARET.—White satin train dress, embroidered with fleur-de-lis—coronet and head-draperies.

JEANETTE.—Plain muslin dress and veil.

PAGE.—Yellow shirt—gold trimmings—silk pantaloons—white shoes.

Cast of the Characters,

As Performed at the Surrey Theatre, Sept. 17, 1832.

<i>Buridan, a Captain in the Italian army</i>	Mr. G. Bennet.
<i>Louis of France</i>	Mr. Nelson Lee.
<i>Philip d'Aulnay</i>	Mr. C. Hill.
<i>Savoisy</i>	Mr. Maitland.
<i>Gaultier d'Aulnay, of the Queen's Guards</i>	Mr. Osbaldiston.
<i>Enguerrand de Marigny, Minister</i>	Mr. Young.
<i>De Pierrefonds</i>	Mr. Roberts.
<i>Page</i>	Miss Boden.
<i>Sieur Roual</i>	Mr. Brunton.
<i>Orsini, Hoste of L'Agneau Blanc</i>	Mr. Dibdin Pitt.
<i>Landri, a ruffian Tapster</i>	Mr. Almar.
<i>Richarde</i>	Mr. Rogers.
<i>Jehan</i>	Mr. Gardiner.
<i>Margeurite de Bourgogne, Queen of France</i> and <i>Navarre</i>	Mrs. W. West
<i>Jeanette, the veiled Woman</i>	Mrs. Young.
<i>Matilde</i>	Miss Jordan.
<i>Julie</i>	Miss Boden.

THE TOWER OF NESLE.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Interior of the Tavern of Orsini, at the Gate of St. Honore—a door, C. F.*

PHILIPPE D'AULNAY *discovered, seated at a table, R., writing—a flask of wine and a goblet near him—*
RICHARD, JEHAN, *and eight other Workmen seated at a table, L.*

Ric. [Calling.] Oh, ho, Orsini! you beer-drawing quack, poison-manufacturer, devil's brewer, and juniper-vender, must I call you by all your names before you will come?

Enter ORSINI, R.

Ors. What would you—wine?

Ric. No; we have wine enough. [*Rises.*] I say, good master, how many souls has your patron, the devil, taken to his holy keeping this goodly morning, below the Tower of Nesle?

Ors. Three.

Ric. Three! the usual number—and all young and handsome?

Ors. All.

Ric. And strangers to Paris?

Ors. Exactly.

Ric. Your pardon, mine host, but I'd give a crown to know the name of the vampire that sucks so much brave and courtly blood, that his own may circulate more freely?

Ors. Why, how should I know?

Ric. And why, ever, at the base of the Tower of Nesle, where the river is deepest, the bodies are ever found?

Ors. Why, how should I know?

Ric. Harkye, a proverb in your ear—"Still streams are always the deepest"—I don't believe you.

Ors. Fool!

Ric. Rogue!—There, I've done with you—I like your wine better than your company.

Phi. [*Calling.*] Host!

Ors. I wait.

Phi. Will one of your tapsters, for a good fee, undertake to deliver this note?

Ors. [*Calling.*] Ho! Landri!

Enter LANDRI, R.

Lan. Here am I—what am I wanted for?

Ors. To deliver a note.

Lan. I can't—I'm on the watch.

Ors. Watching what?

Lan. The kettle on the fire.

Phi. Hang the kettle, man—there's a silver piece for thee.

Lan. I'll run to do your bidding like a lapwing; and as for the kettle, it may boil over and be——. Good morning, sir. [*Going.*]

Phi. Ho! come back—that letter is for Captain Gaultier d'Aulnay.

Lan. [*Looking at the letter.*] Well, I see it is—do you suppose I don't know how to read? [*Exit, D. F.*]

Ric. Well, neighbours, didst see the public entry of Queen Margaret and her two sisters, Princesses Blanche and Joan?

Jeh. To be sure, I did; and a rare cavalcade was there—symptoms, my masters, of new taxes—

When the rich live in clover,

With the poor 'tis all over.

No figure in a travelling wax-work looked half so fine as Gaultier d'Aulnay. Did you observe him?

Ors. Yes, though he didn't me, or his horse's hoof wouldn't have trodden on my toes.

Jeh. And what did you in return?

Ric. I called the rider a bastard.

Jeh. Under the rose?

Ric. Oh, yes, under the rose.

Phi. [*Starting up.*] Who calls Gaultier d'Aulnay a bastard?

Ric. I do.

Phi. [*Throwing the goblet at his head.*] Take that.

Ric. Stand by me.

Jeh. Give him the blanket.

Phi. Two words to that bargain. I'll spit the first carcass on my rapier who dares to touch me. I have but one sword, but it has a point.

Ric. And your one sword we will match with a dozen knives. Come on, Sir Knight of the furbelow and feather.

Phi. [*Drawing his sword.*] Dog of the kennel, I am for thee.

[*Music.—The Workmen attack Philipe with their knives drawn.*]

Enter CAPTAIN BURIDAN, D. F.

Bur. Ten against one! ten workmen against one gentleman!—No, that's five too many.

[*He attacks them—they retreat, crying, "We are wrong."*]

Re-enter ORSINI, R.

Bur. Landlord, close your door—do not suffer any of these ruffians to escape and give an alarm—they have been wrong. [*To the Workmen.*] You have been wrong.

Workmen. We have.

[*Buridan and Philipe sit at the table, R.*]

Phi. Enough—we pardon you—remain at your tables—this one is ours. Send me some wine, landlord, and by our friend, Landri.

Ors. He is forth upon a message. Your orders—I will serve you.

Bur. As you will—but be speedy. [*Exit Orsini, R.—the Workmen murmur.*] Is any one murmuring there?

Ric. By no means, my lord—oh, dear, no.

Phi. Sir, you have found me in, and rescued me from, a most awkward dilemma. I shall not forget the deed, if circumstances should ever throw you into a like situation.

Bur. Your hand, sir.

Phi. With all my heart.

Enter ORSINI, R., with wine, and places it on the table.

Bur. Enough, enough, sir—your health, sir. [*Drinks.*] Now take two pots to those fellows, and let them drink ours. [*Orsini points the Workmen off, L., and exit, R.*] 'Tis well. Why, this is the first time, young soldier, that I have seen you in the venerable tavern of Orsini—are you newly arrived in this goodly city of Paris?

Phi. But just in time to witness the entry of good Queen Margaret.

Bur. Queen! not just yet.

Phi. But will to-morrow, for on that day will arrive for the purpose of succeeding Philip Le Bel, his father, our good King Louis the Tenth. I have availed myself of his accession to the throne, to return from Flanders, where my regiment was engaged.

Bur. And I from Italy, where I was likewise serving. It should seem, good master, that we are here with the same object.

Phi. I to advance my fortune.

Bur. I for the same object. But your means?

Phi. Only that my brother is captain of the guard to royal Margaret.

Bur. His name?

Phi. Gaultier d'Aulnay.

Bur. Then, sir, are you sure of advancement, for the queen can refuse nothing to your brother.

Phi. On that hope I have writ to him to meet me here.

Bur. What, amid the rabble?

Phi. Look around you.

Bur. They are all gone.

Phi. And we may speak freely. May I demand your name?

Bur. My name—say, rather, my names, for I have two; one by birth, and by which I am not known, and one by adoption, by which I am known.

Phi. Disclose of them which you please.

Bur. Well, then, for that which I now bear, it is Buridan.

Phi. Have you friends at court?

Bur. None.

Phi. Your resources, then?

Bur. [*Placing his hand on his forehead, then on his heart.*] Are here, and here—in my head and in my heart.

Phi. You reckon on Cupid for your good countenance.

Bur. On something more, my good friend. I am from the same country as the Queen: I was page to Duke Robert, her father, who was assassinated; the Queen and I together did not then number the years that each of us may now own.

Phi. What is your age?

Bur. Some five-and-thirty years.

Phi. Well?

Bur. A secret there is 'tween me and Margaret, which will build my fortune or dig my grave.

Phi. The better fortune, then, to you.

Bur. Heaven give you a good one, soldier.

Phi. I've not made yet so bad a beginning: this morning was I followed by a woman; I slackened my pace, she doubled hers; she gained upon me, and we met: "Sir," said she, "a lady, a lady, sir, who loves a soldier, has taken a fancy to you; are you as brave as handsome—are you as confiding as you are brave?" If, said I, your mistress ask only for a heart callous and iron to the frown of danger, provided she be pretty, I do possess a heart of this material, and it is hers. She is all this, was the reply: at curfew time she will meet you. Where?—In the Rue de Froid Mantel; a man will approach you and take your hand; you will show him this ring, and you will follow him. Adieu, soldier; courage and love's transports. She then placed the ring upon my finger, and disappeared.

Bur. You intend to keep the appointment?

Phi. Be sure I will not fail in it.

Bur. You have my congratulations; for my own part, I have been in Paris five days, and except Landri, the tapster here, who is an old camp acquaintance, I have not seen a countenance on which I could fix a trace; and yet I've doubts, and merry ones, my frolicsome days are not over yet.

Enter a veiled Woman, D. F.—she touches Buridan's shoulder as he sits at the table.

Wom. Signor Capitano.

Bur. Well, my good woman.

Wom. Two words, and softly.

Bur. And why not loudly?

Wom. Because there are but two words to say, and four ears to hear them.

Bur. [*Rising.*] Enough: take my arm, and tell me those two words.

Wom. [*Taking his arm, and leading him, L.*] A lovely lady, who loves a soldier, has taken a fancy to you; are you as brave as you are handsome? are you as confiding as you are brave?

Bur. I never yet shrunk from a battle or an assigna-

tion, provided the man had a right to spurs and a gold chain, and the lady was young and handsome.

Wom. She is both ; and expects you this evening.

Bur. Where, and at what hour ?

Wom. At curfew tolling, near the second tower of the Louvre.

Bur. I shall be there.

Wom. A man will come to you and ask your hand ; you will show him this ring, and will follow him. Adieu, captain ; courage and the transports of love. [*Exit, D. F.*]

Bur. [*To Philipe.*] Is this a dream, or a trick, now, this veiled woman ?

Phi. [*Rising.*] What of her ?

Bur. Only she has repeated to me the very same words a veiled woman had before pronounced to you.

Phi. An assignation ?

Bur. In the very terms of yours

Phi. A ring, too.

Bur. Exactly like yours.

Phi. Let me see it.

Bur. Behold.

Phi. Will you go ?

Bur. Assuredly.

Phi. They must be two sisters.

Bur. So much the better ; then we shall be brothers-in-law.

Enter LANDRI, showing in GAULTIER D'AULNAY D. F.

Lan. This way, your lordly lordship.

Phi. (R.) Ah, Gaultier, my dear brother !

Gau. (C.) Welcome, welcome, brother ! This gentleman——

Phi. Has done me service I shall remember while I've life.

Gau. Thanks ! and doubly for my brother and myself, for 'tis as freely given as the broad heaven and this good hand.

Bur. (L.) It seems you love each other with a pure and holy love.

Phi. No wonder. We are twins—are orphans—a red cross marked upon our arms—our signs of genealogy—we were together exposed upon the steps of Notre Dame.

Gau. And from that time have been little absent from each other until now. Call me not superstitious, but

were I to put faith in augury, I should say, when he dies I shall die; for as I entered the world but a few hours before him, so could I survive him but a day. Come, brother, home.

Phi. No, brother, not to-night; a certain spot there is, where I am waited for.

Gau. How! an assignation, and so newly come to Paris! Beware—the Seine of late has from its dark bosom cast up many carcasses; ay, and of gentlemen and strangers to this fair city. Have a care.

Phi. You hear, Sir Oracle. Good captain, will you go?

Bur. Oh, I shall go.

Phi. And so will I.

Gau. How long have you been in Paris, sir?

Bur. Five days.

Gau. Five days!—I have my reasons—I warn, I implore you not to go.

Phi. But I have promised.

Gau. Nay, if you have promised—but at to-morrow's dawn——

Phi. I will be with you.

Gau. And you, sir, when disposed to honour us.

Bur. Thanks—you have my thanks.

[*Curfew strikes eight.*]

Re-enter ORSINI, R.

Ors. The curfew.

Bur. I'm waited for at the Second Tower of the Louvre. [Exit, D. F.]

Phi. I at the Rue Froid Mantel. [Exit, D. F.]

Gau. I at the Palace. [Exit, D. F.—*Orsini whistles.*]

Enter LANDRI and two Ruffian Tapsters, R.

Lan. And we—what waits for us?

Ors. The Chamber of Death, in the Tower of Nesle.

[*Exeunt, D. F.*]

SCENE II.—*The Interior of the Tower of Nesle—two doors, R. and L.—a window, C. F., with folding shutters—a distant view of Paris through the window—thunder and lightning.—Lights down and up as Orsini enters.*

Enter ORSINI, with a lamp.

Ors. This strife of the elements is worthy of our pur-

pose, and will well suit our orgies. The river, swollen with the constant rain, will float the devoted carcasses more swiftly down. 'Tis a strange night, and this a strange spot for the palace of all-subduing Cupid. [*Laughing without, R.*] Laugh on, if there be mirth on the brink of the grave, enjoy it, for you must die ; your eyes have seen what they should not have seen, and they must close for ever. Your lips have felt the warm pressure they should not have felt—they must be sealed with the signet of death.

Enter LANDRI, L. D.

Lan. I say, master, do you know what o'clock it is ?

Ors. No.

Lan. Why, then, I'll tell you—'tis coming near my breakfast time—'tis nearly two.

Ors. And what of that ?

Lan. Only that I begin to grow hungry, and I am tired of waiting.

Ors. But your fellows ?

Lan. Are as tired as I.

Ors. They are paid.

Lan. Oh, I grant you they are paid ; but for striking, not for waiting : and if this is to be the plan, let the pay be doubled, so much for the blow, and so much for the waiting.

Ors. Silence—some one is here—begone.

Lan. Well, I am going, master, an't I ?—But for all that, all that I have said, I've said like a gentleman.

[*Exit, L. D.*]

Enter QUEEN MARGARET, at the door, R. U. E.

Mar. Orsini

Ors. Madam.

Mar. Are your people here, and ready

Ors. Quite.

Mar. Is it late ?

Ors. Day hurries on.

Mar. No, no ; it is not day so soon.

Ors. It is ; the lights must be extinguished, the cushions all removed ; you must to your noble home, across the Seine, and we must to our work.

Mar. No ; there is one that we must save, the companion of my sister. He is the very image of my Gaultier—we must save him.

Ors. Art mad, madam?

Mar. I tell you, he must be saved; he has not seen my face, and he must, he shall be saved.

Ors. At your pleasure, madam—only——

Mar. Open your gates—sheathe your daggers—the other victims are by this no more. Be your hand unstained by his blood.

Ors. As you will, madam. [*Exit, and bolts the door, L.*]

Enter PHILIP D'AULNAY, R. U. E.

Phi. Do I again behold you?

Mar. You must begone.

Phi. What, descend from paradise to dull, cold, plodding earth?

Mar. To stay, were ruin to me and death to you. Breathe not a syllable of what has passed, even to your dearest friend—I entreat it—I command it.

Phi. Nay, thou art most cruel, most ungracious. Thy name—by one soft kiss, thy name.

Mar. Thou shalt not know my name.

Phi. Thou most unkind, so to return my love by this forgetfulness—thy name I will know.

Mar. How?

Phi. Thus!

[*Takes a gold hair-pin from her head, and with it marks her face through the mask.*]

Mar. Sir, you have wounded me.

Phi. A scratch, a very slight scratch—but enough for me to know you when we meet again.

Mar. You have signed your own death-warrant, madman and fool! What, ho! [*Bolts heard*]

Re-enter ORSINI, L. D.

Mar. Let my first orders only be attended to; I'll wait without.

[*Music.—Exit Margaret, L. D.—Orsini closes the shutters, and exit with the lamp, bolting the door, L.*]

Enter CAPTAIN BURIDAN, R. U. E.—*Lights down.*

Bur. Who goes there?

Phi. (L.) I.

Bur. (R.) Who are you?

Phi. What matters it?

Bur. I know the voice.

Phi. Buridan!

Bur Philip!

Phi. You here?

Bur. Would I were elsewhere!

Phi. Where are we?

Bur. Know you not who were the women who received us?

Phi. Buridan, you are agitated.

Bur. Have you no suspicion of their rank?

Phi. Not the slightest.

Bur. I tell you, they are high-born dames. Didst ever observe, in any camp amour, hands of such snowy whiteness, smiles as cold and heartless, habits so rich, voices so sweet, looks so full of treason? I tell you, sir, they must be high-born dames.

Phi. And what of that?

Bur. Does it inspire no fear?

Phi. Of what?

Bur. The care they have taken to remain unknown—

Phi. There is one that, if I see, I warrant I know her.

Bur. Did she unmask, then?

Phi. No; but I marked, with this golden pin, upon her face, a mark she will not part with.

Bur. Madman! There was a hope we might escape, and you have now destroyed us.

Phi. What mean you?

Bur. [Going to the window, c. f.] What building's that before you?

Phi. The Louvre.

Bur. Flows at your feet?

Phi. The Seine.

Bur. And o'er us, and about us, the Tower of Nesle.

Phi. The Tower of Nesle!

Bur. Yes! the tower of Nesle! where corpses daily drift adown the river. [Comes down, R.]

Phi. And my sword was taken as I entered.

Bur. And mine: 'tis not I fear—but flight alone can save us. [Crossing to L.] This door—

Phi. Is bolted. If I fall, you will avenge me?

Bur. I claim as much of thee.—Shouldst thou escape, hence to thy brother Gaultier, who has such power—but stay, he will want proofs—we must have writing.

Phi. Here are neither pens nor parchment.

Bur. But here are tablets—this pin—thou'st blood in thy young veins—write, write, that, when I cry for vengeance, thy brother may believe me; write, "*I die, as-*

sassinated by Mar——" I will add the name, when I am sure of it. [*Receiving the tablet and gold pin.*] Now let us fly, each on a different side, and trust our lives to fate—adieu!

Phi. Brother, adieu, either for life or death.

[*Exit, R. U. E.—Music—Buridan attempts to go out, R. D.—the bolts withdrawn.*]

Enter LANDRI, meeting him.

Bur. Ah!

Lan. Now, sir, have you prayed?

Bur. I know that voice.

Lan. Ah, my own captain!

Bur. Landri, Landri, I must be saved—I must not perish by an assassin's hand. [*Groan without, R. U. E.*] What was that cry?

Lan. That of your third companion—he dies.

Bur. And you—you would strike me?

Lan. No, but I wouldn't yet—there is little hope to save you.

Bur. That staircase——

Lan. Is guarded.

Bur. This window——

Lan. Can you swim?

Bur. At least, at such a time, I dare to try.

Lan. The window, then, and heaven be your guard.

Bur. 'Tis heaven alone can aid me.

[*Jumps out of the window, C. F.*]

Enter ORSINI, hastily, L. D.

Ors. Where is your man?

Lan. (R.) In the river.

Ors. Is he dead?

Lan. Oh, yes, he is dead, depend upon it. [*Aside.*] If he can't swim.

MUSIC.—Re-enter PHILIP D'AULNAY, wounded, R. U. E.

Phi. Help, help, my brother, help! [*Falls.*]

Enter QUEEN MARGARET, with a torch and mask, L. D.

Enter two Ruffians, with daggers, R. U. E.—Lights up.

Phi. Let me behold thy face.

Mar. Thou shalt behold my face. [*Lifts the mask*]

Phi. Margaret of Burgundy, Queen of France! [*Dies.*]

Mar. Yes, Margaret of Burgundy! [*Music.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*State Apartment in the Palace of Queen Margaret—folding doors, C. F.*

Enter GAULTIER D'AULNAY, L. S. E.

Gau. I am too early—Margaret has not risen yet. Ah! had her love been half as fierce as mine—but why should I cheat the time with chiding thus? Thou a queen—a subject I. Alas! a double sovereignty I must maintain; first unto her, and then to love—[*A laugh.*] 'Tis the giddy laugh of the young courtiers—they come!

Enter SAVOISY, ROUAL, PIERREFONDS, and Waiters, L. U. E.

Sav. What, Gaultier! I'm glad to see thee, 'pon my thoul! How is the brightest of all earthly splendour, the Queen of Diamonds and of Hearts? she whom I have not seen for an age of ages? I've not, upon my thoul.

Gau. My Lord Savoisy, what goodly news to-day?

Sav. I take not in the news.

Gau. The King enters his goodly city, as we hear, to-morrow.

Sav. Let the King look to the healths of his people! For it is a most irritating reflection to the nerves of the polished—as I, my lord, am, and you, my lord, are—to reflect how many bodies of the handsomest of men are daily cast up by the Seine, at the foot of the Tower of Nesle. Good! my good lords, how dangerous it is to be a pretty creature! And I indulge a timidity, that anon, and on some blackballing diem, my Appolonian figure will be immersed in that terrible washhand-bason of nature—the Seine River.

Gau. Bubbles float upon the surface.

Sav. So do corks.

Gau. I fear, my lord, you are fashioned like an arrow—heaviest, where you should have most point.

Sav. And where is that, my lord?

Gau. At the head.

Sav. Thy pardon! but the plume that crests thy bonnet has taken unto itself the liberty of undulating over the left eye, and——

Gau. Your pardon! your lordship's society is most agreeable at a distance. [Courtiers laugh.]

Sav. 'Tis very possible, my lords, if you forget that you are gentlemen, that I may kick you all into the middle of the following week, in my best-behaved pair of morocco boots.

Gau. Strange and eventful times are these for a gentleman, and full of mystery. Have any present here met with my brother?

Sav. Describe to me the person of the individual, and I will answer the query—I will, upon my thoul.

Gau. My brother is a gentleman——

Sav. With such a person I've not met to-day.

Rou. But of this Tower! where stands the Tower of Nesle?

Sav. On the identical spot where it was built. The Virgin pardon me! But I was intothticated last night—humbly naughty—oh, I was, 'pon honour; and walking or rather undulating, by the Tower of Nesle, I saw lights in the windows—heard guitars tinkling—and feet bumping the floor, as if the devil and all his imps were dancing the gallopade, and had manufactured the old tower into a ball-room. Once I looked—twice I looked—and then treble.

Gau. You were drunk, my lord, and saw double. But here comes the King's prime-minister, Mons. de Marigny.

Enter ENGUERRAND MARIGNY, L. S. E.

Gau. The King comes here to-morrow—is it not so

Eng. It is so.

Rou. May he bring happiness!

Eng. A good king will ever do so.

Enter Page, C. D. F.

Page. The Queen!

Enter QUEEN MARGARET and Ladies, C. D. F.

Mar. Save ye, gentlemen!

Sav. Good morrow to the Queen—not only our Queen by blood, but our Queen of Beauty.

Gau. Do not expose yourself, Savois; I hint it to you as a friend—I do, upon my thoul.

Sav. Upon my thoul, I'm much obliged to you.

Mar. Captain Gaultier, where is your brother?

Gau. Alas, madam! I know not; and my fears for him are beyond expression—again, this morning, below

the Place de Séive, the river has thrown up another carcass.

Mar. There were two, sir. [*Aside.*] Only two.

Rou. This can but be the work of sorcerers and fiends, who, to carry on their dark and mystic mummary, deal wholesale in the trade of blood.

Mar. Mons. de Marigny gives little credit to tales so wild and marvellous.

Sav. [*At the window.*] Then let him cast his ministerial eyes out of the window, and convince himself; for here, directly under the verandah, stands a fellow, with a beard near to an acre in length, and a form as commanding as a mountain poplar.

Mar. [*Sits in the chair of state, R.*] Call the varlet in—we will fathom his skill; and he shall tell us the fate of Mons. de Marigny.

Sav. What, ho! Bohemian gipsy! devils! factotum and deputy—if thy boots be not offensively out of order, please you to step up the marble staircase. Why, curth the fellow! he is here, and must have come in upon a sky-rocket.

Enter BURIDON, in the disguise of a beggar, L.

Sav. Sir Tatterdemalion! the Queen bids you disclose to her premier Mons. de Marigny.

Bur. (L. c.) If he would hear me, well—let him come nearer—Enguerrand de Marigny, I wait.

Eng. Speak—I listen. Announce our several dooms. In my sleeve I laugh at thy folly, man; but pray go on—disgrace or death are met with equal scorn from such a thing as thee.

Bur. He laughs that wins—it may fall out that you may lose: if your account with heaven have need of regulation, about it quickly—time passes—and there remains for you on earth but three short dwindling days.

Eng. Three days, fellow! Thou art most bountiful. Who in this world can insure himself three hours?

Bur. And thou, Gaultier d'Aulnay—what shall I say to thee? At thy age, the past is only yesterday—tomorrow, all the future.

Gau. Speak, then, of the present.

Bur. Bid me speak of the past, the future, but not the present.

Gau. What are the secrets of my brain, then, now?

Bur. You are waiting for your brother, and your brother does not come.

Gau. Where is my brother?

Bur. A crowd is gathering on the banks of the Seine.

Gau. And my brother——

Bur. With cries of horror, they surround two corpses.

Gau. And my brother?

Bur. Haste thee to the Place de Grève.

Gau. My brother?

Bur. Look to the arm of one of the drowned men, and one more voice will then cry, "Horror! horror!"

Gau. My brother! oh, my brother! [*Rushes out, L. S. E.*]

Bur. And thou, Margaret of Burgundy, askest thou nothing? or doubtest thou that I can tell thee ought? Thou thinkest, perhaps, a royal destiny transcends the human art, and mortal scrutiny cannot pervade its secrets

Mar. Away! of thee I will ask nothing.

Bur. But thou must hear me.

Mar. Marigny, leave not the chamber

Bur. What woman is it, Margaret, who would have the night as black as pitch without, and yet within would emulate heaven's fires?

Mar. Man, who called thee? What would't thou have with me?

[*Buridan goes to the throne, and puts his foot on the step.*]

Bur. [*Apart to the Queen.*] Is not a carcass wanting to thy reckoning? Didst thou not hope to hear of three instead of two?

Mar. Peace! or tell me whence thou hast the power of knowing.

Bur. [*Showing the gold pin.*] This is my talisman: thou puts thy hand upon thy cheek, Queen Margaret [*Aside.*], that tells me all 'tis she. [*Marigny approaches—the Queen and Buridan go towards L.*] Back, Monsieur de Marigny; I would say one word to the Queen, that none must hear but she.

Eng. I receive orders only from the Queen.

Mar. A moment, good Marigny, do retire.

[*She comes down, R. C.*]
Bur. Thou see'st that I know all—thy life! thy honour! and thy love! are all within my hands. At curfew's sound, I shall await thee at Orsini's.

Mar. At that hour, I cannot quit the palace.

Bur. [*Sarcastic.*] It is not further than the Tower of Nesle.

Mar. I'll come.

Bur. You will bring a parchment, and the seal of state.

Mar. But from this hour to then——

Bur. You will remain alone within your chamber.

Mar. What ! alone ?

Bur. Entirely—not even Gaultier d'Aulnay must approach. My lords, the Queen thanks you for all your cares. [*To Margaret.*] Forbid the entry to your chamber.

Mar. Guards, give no one entrance to my chamber.

Bur. To-night, then, at Orsini's, I shall meet you.

Mar. To-night.

[*Exit, C. D. F.—Ladies and Page follow—Music—Buridan hurries off, L.—Courtiers observe him with terror.*]

Sav. Well, if I ever—no, I never saw such a fellow before, 'pon honour. My Lord Marigny, what said he to the Queen ?

Eng. What the Queen has not yet confided to her faithful minister.

Sav. That's an insult, my lord ; you—you——

Eng. [*Suddenly.*] What, my lord ?

Sav. A gentleman.

Enter GAULTIER D'AULNAY, hastily, L. S. E.

Gau. Justice ! justice ! my brother is murdered—drowned ! I have seen his corpse streaming with blood and water in the public street ! Eternal curses on the villain who——but I will have justice—retribution for my brother's blood—retribution ! Savois, know you the assassin ?

Sav. That's another insult. I shall put myself into a passion, and disarrange my rouge.—I keep company with an assassin ! I, my lord ? that cannot abide the sight of a common butcher.

Gau. Monsieur de Marigny, [*Crosses, c.*] to you, then, do I look—you are the guardian of the tower of Paris ; and every drop of blood that here is spilt, demands of you redress. Where is the Queen ? the Queen ! I will see her ! My brother, my poor brother ! Margaret, 'tis I that call—I, Gaultier d'Aulnay !

[*He rushes to the folding-doors, C. F., and is stopped by a Captain of the Guard.*]

Cap. You cannot pass.

Gau. Fool, stand aside ! No, Margaret.

Cap. I do my duty, lord, and will not.

Gau. Back !

[*Laughs—Music.*]

Cap. [*Disarming him.*] Back, thou !

Gau. Confusion !

Sav. Stop him ! he will do himself a mischief.

Gau. My brother ! my lost brother ! [*Scene closes—exit, L.*]

SCENE II.—*The Tavern of Orsini.*

Enter ORSINI, R.

Ors. I thought I heard a step approach my portal.

Mar. [*Without, c. d. f.*] Open, Orsini, it is I.

Ors. [*Opening the door.*] The Queen, alone, and so late, too ! how strange !

Enter QUEEN MARGARET, c. d. f.

Mar. It is strange ; but what has happened to me is stranger still. You must give me up this chamber for half an hour.

Ors. Most readily.

[*Knocking heard.*]

Mar. Some one knocked !

Ors. Shall I open ?

Mar. No—leave me. But, hark'ye ! no listening

Ors. I will be deaf, as I am dumb.

Mar. Be so, and you will do well. [*Exit Orsini, R.—Margaret goes to the door.*] Is it you ?

Bur. [*Without.*] Yes, it is I. [*She opens the door.*]

Enter BURIDON, in his first dress.

Mar. You are not the gipsy ?

Bur. No, I am the captain ; but then, if the captain and the Egyptian should be one, why, it is all the same. This dress is better—it better can defend its master, than that he wore this morning ; for in times like these, and at this hour, the streets are far from safe.

Mar. I am come——

Bur. [*Brings forward a chair, and sits, c.*] And you have done well to come, lady.

Mar. You will acknowledge my complaisance.

Bur. Whether it be complaisance or fear, it matters not : I was sure that you would come—that suffices me.

Mar. It seems that you are not an Egyptian.

Bur. No : by heaven, I am a Christian ! but hope has left me now.

Mar. [*Sitting, R. c.*] I usually am addressed by men on foot, and uncovered.

Bur. [*Rising*] Well, then, I will speak to thee uncovered—not that you are a queen, but that you are a

woman. Look around you : is this a royal palace ? art thou here a queen ? No, no : here there are but a man and a woman ; and since the woman trembles, and the man is calm—'tis he who is the king.

Mar. And who art thou, that dare address me thus ?

Bur. Who am I ? For the moment, Burdon, the Captain ; I have, perhaps, another name, which you may one day learn, though the day be not yet come. What makes me think thou tremblest is, that in thy reckoning, as in mine, there wants another carcass—the Seine threw up but two last night.

Mar. And the third——

Bur. Now stands before thee, living—Burdon, the Captain.

Mar. [*Starting up.*] Impossible !

Bur. Is it ? Must I recount the whole proceedings of the Tower of Nesle ?

Mar. Proceed.

Bur. There were three women—Margaret, the Queen—Jean and Blanche, her sisters : there were three men—Hector de Chevseune, the Captain Buridan, and Philip d'Aulnay.

Mar. Philip d'Aulnay ?

Bur. Gaultier's brother—'twas he that wished you to take off your mask—'twas he that stamped the mark upon your face.

Mar. Then, Philip and Hector are dead, and thou remain'st.

Bur. It is so.

Mar. And this sums up thy shallow wisdom ? I will destroy the Queen—the Queen loves Gaultier d'Aulnay—and I will tell him, the Queen has slain his brother—tell him, and will he believe thee ? No ! thou hast my secret—I have thine. 'Tis but to hold my finger up, and Captain Buridan joins company with Philip d'Aulnay.

Bur. Do so ; and at ten o'clock to-morrow Gaultier d'Aulnay will open certain tablets a monk has given him,—and upon the holy cross he swore to open at that hour, unless he sees a certain captain ; that captain is myself—assassinate me—he will not see me, and will open the tablets.

Mar. Think'st he will believe thy writing, rather than my words ?

Bur. He will believe his brother's—that brother's latest words, traced in his blood—he will believe the

words, "*I die, assassinated by Margaret of Burgundy.*" And Margaret will, killing me, restore thee to thy safety. Send me to join my murdered comrades in the flood of Seine, my secret still survives, and Gaultier d'Aulnay shall be my avenger.

Mar. If that be so——

Bur. And so it is.

Mar. Dost thou want gold?—I'll load thee with it—ask thee anything. Here, here is the seal, the parchment which thou bad'st me bring. Speak, art thou ambitious? dost wish a freeman's death? Thy wishes, man, thy wishes.

Bur. I may need all these things—listen, Margaret—here is no king nor queen: but two who needs would make a compact, and woe to him or her who first shall break it. Margaret, I would have gold enough to pave a palace.

Mar. It shall be thine, though I should melt the sceptre and the crown.

Bur. I would be first minister.

Mar. Thou know'st that Marigny now holds that place.

Bur. Well, I would have his title and his place.

Mar. It cannot be without his death.

Bur. I tell thee I will have his title and his place.

Mar. Thine are they both.

Bur. The sovereignty of France we will divide between us; between us we will rock it as a cradle; we two will be king. The real king I will keep silent, Margaret; and thou shalt every night have thy gondola on the waters. I will nail up the windows of the house which look towards the Tower of Nesle. Dost thou accept this, Margaret?

Mar. I do accept it.

Bur. And to-morrow at ten o'clock I will take back the tablets and give them you.

Mar. You shall be welcome, sir.

Bur. The order to arrest Marigny.

Mar. [*Writes,*] 'Tis here.

Bur. 'Tis well. Margaret, adieu—we meet again to-morrow. [*Exit, c. d. r.*]

Mar. Am I awake, and braved so boldly, too?—I a duke's daughter—the king's wife—regent of France. Those tablets—they will be my ruin. Could I so fasci-

nate Gaultier as to make him give them up to me, all might yet be well ; and ——

Enter GAULTIER D' AULNAY, C. D. F.

Mar. Excellent ! the very man.

Gau. Margaret !

Mar. Gaultier, my guardian angel, what sends thee hither ?

Gau. Pity me—avenge me—my brother has been murdered.

Mar. Murdered ! and by whom ?

Gau. I know not ; but let all search be made.

Mar. It shall be made, be sure it shall ; and thou shalt be avenged, Gaultier d'Aulnay. [*In embracing she feels the tablet in his girdle—aside.*] The tablets ! they are there. [*Aloud.*] What hast thou in thy girdle, Gaultier d'Aulnay ?

Gau. Some tablets.

Mar. The records of the sentiments of some of my court dames, no doubt, Gaultier d'Aulnay.

Gau. Is this a time, when my brother's blood comes up to heaven—is this a time for love and jealousy ?—No, I had them from a captain and a stranger.

Mar. It would be strange, indeed, if I believed thee. The king comes here to-morrow—he must not find you here, and may suspect—I demand your absence, sir, you and your tablets both.

Gau. Think'st thou in earnest that they come from a woman ?

Mar. I am sure on't, or you had freely shown them to me to dispel my fears.

Gau. But I have promised they shall not quit my hands till to-morrow ; nay, I have sworn.

Mar. And what oaths have I not broken for thee, Gaultier ; I have forsworn both heaven and earth to make thee happy. But words are idle—the tablets, or we part for ever.

Gau. But were it known.

Mar. Can I not keep the secret ?—If I have done thee wrong——

Gau. You will return them to me at ten to-morrow ?

Mar. I will return them in a minute.

Gau. [*Giving them.*] They are yours.

Mar. Now tremble, Buridan.

[*Exit, R.*]

Gau. Curse on this weakness!—Oh, my brother, did I come here to talk of love and calm the frivolous suspicions of woman?—No, no, I came for vengeance—pardon me, brother, pardon.

Re-enter MARGARET, hastily, R.

Mar. [*Giving back the tablets.*] I have wronged thee, dear Gaultier, much wronged thee: there was nothing in the tablets—no woman gave them to thee. We will not separate—I will brave all—the king's suspicions and the court intrigues—I will brave all for thee.

Gau. But my brother?

Mar. Search is already made, and suspicion falls on——

Gau. On whom?

Mar. A stranger, whose name, I think, is—is——

Gau. What?

Mar. Buridan.

Gau. The order for his arrest.

Mar. What, wouldst thou arrest him?

Gau. Ay, would I tear him from the altar's foot.

Mar. [*Signing a parchment.*] Here is the order.

Gau. Philipe, look down from heaven, thy avenger comes.

[*Rushes out with the order, C. D. F.*]

Mar. Buridan, Buridan, look thou to thyself. [*Exit, R.*]

SCENE III.—*The Front of the Ancient Louvre, stretching down, L., till it nearly joins the river on the other bank of the Tower of Nesle.*

Enter SAVOISY, ROUAL, and Courtiers, R.

Sav. Her majesty hath not yet peeped forth from her lattice—what a pity, as rising early improves the complexion; it does, upon my thoul.

Enter BURIDAN and five Guards, L.

Sav. By the way, who is that gentleman? a marquis or a duke, no doubt, or he wouldn't come attended by five guards.

Rao. Some Italian adventurer, no doubt, seeking his fortune.

Sav. And very good means behind to seize it.

Bur. (L.) And at his side wherewith to keep it, too, when it is seized.

Sav. Positively, sare, you will put me in possession of your secret.

Bur. Faith, it would take but one lesson to teach it to you.

Sav. Positively, sare, you are very civil.

Bur. Positively, sare, you are not.

Sav. Here comes the minister, Monsieur de Marigny.

Enter ENGUERRAND DE MARIGNY, R.

Eng. How is this, my lords, you are not within the palace?

Bur. Because an arrest was to be made this morning, and the interior of the palace is a sanctuary.

Eng. An arrest, and I know nothing of it?

Bur. I was waiting, my lord, to give you intimation of it. [*Giving the order.*] Read, sir.

Sav. The plot marvellously thickens.

Bur. Read aloud, sir.

Eng. [*Reads.*] *Ordered, by Margaret of Burgundy, by the hands of Captain Buridan, to arrest, wherever he may be found, Enguerrand de Marigny.*

Bur. I am Captain Buridan.

Eng. And you arrest me by order of the queen.

Bur. Your sword, sir.

Eng. 'Tis yours—draw it, sir; you will find it bright and stainless; and when the executioner shall divorce my body from my soul, the latter will be found as pure and spotless as this sword.

[*The Queen and Gaultier appear on the balcony, L.*

Gau. Enough.

[*They retire.*

Bur. Conduct the Sieur de Marigny to the Chateau de Vincennes.

Eng. And thence?

Bur. To Mount Faucon; you have built a gibbet there, and 'tis but fit that you should try its powers.

Eng. For criminals I raised it, not for martyrs; but heaven's will be done. [*Exit de Marigny, guarded, R. S. E.*

Bur. This is a just and honourable man. I pity him.

Enter GAULTIER D'AULNAY, and four Guards, L.

Gau. Are you Captain Buridan?

Bur. I am.

Gau. You are accused, sir, of the murder of my poor brother.

Bur. [*Starting.*] How say you, I accused?

Gau. Ay, you sir; the companion of his last night's revel—shame on you, ruffian!—Your sword.

Sav. By my thoul, they have arrested the Italian. Maccaroni will be cheap in the market, 'pon honour.

[Exit, L.]

Bur. There is my sword, and now my tablets.

Gau. Your tablets?

Bur. Yes; have you parted with them?

Gau. No, sir; take them back again.

Bur. [Examining them.] Eternal curses!—Gaultier, you have given these tablets from your hands.

Gau. How, say you?

Bur. I say these tablets have passed into the hands of the Queen.

Gau. How know you that?

Bur. One moment, one second—by fraud, surprise, or force, these tablets have left your hands.

Gau. Well, I do confess it.

Bur. That instant, then, sufficed to pronounce the decree of death—the death is mine—on your head be my blood, for it is you who have destroyed me.

Gau. I?

Bur. Yes; you see this torn leaf?

Gau. I do.

Bur. Upon that leaf was written by your brother, and in your brother's blood——

Gau. What was so written?

Gau. No matter now; now you would not believe me, for the leaf is torn. You are a blinded and misguided fool.

Gau. Oh, tell me what was on that leaf.

Bur. There was——

Mar. [In the balcony.] Conduct that prisoner to the grand chatelet.

Gau. What was there?

Bur. There was Gaultier d'Aulnay—is a man destitute of honour and good faith, and could not for a single day preserve the trust confided to him; that was what there was, false man, 'twas that! Well-played Queen Margaret—so much for the first stake, the second shall be mine, at least I hope so much—forward.

[Exit, guarded, R.]

SCENE IV.—A Street in Paris.

Enter ORSINI.

Ors. (L.) I wish Queen Margaret would pay me my full reward, and find another castellan for her Tower of

Nesle. I begin to be tired of the trade of blood, and would fly, if I dared, without it. Psha! I talk as if the days in which I wore a pinafore were not gone by. If I fled, no cavern, nook, or corner of the earth would hide me from her vengeance. Fly, impossible!—Who is there?

Enter LANDRI, with a pitcher, L.

Lan. It's only I, my master, and a pitcher of wine.

Ors. Art thou going to be drunk?

Lan. No; I'm going to be foolish.

Ors. Art thou to be paid for playing the fool?

Lan. No; I play the fool for nothing.

Ors. Explain.

Lan. The Queen, heaven hang her majesty!—

Ors. Bless, sirrah, bless.

Lan. Well, then, bless the Queen, and hang up you.

Ors. There, take your own way; do but say on, and quickly.

Lan. To proceed; I am engaged to marry the turnkey's daughter, of the grand Chatelet. Yes, we are to be married—but that's my business.

Ors. Heaven keep it so.

Lan. Well, she is to open the door for me; and as the captain did me a good turn once by saving me from the drummer's lash—what a pity it is to flog soldiers, an't it, sir?—I thought, as he was about to be hanged, I'd take him this pitcher of wine, that he might get so tipsy as not to be able to find it out until it was all over, quiet and comfortable.

Ors. Well, about it. You are a sad rogue, Landri.

[*Exit, L.*]

Lan. You are another. Between you and I, 'twould puzzle the devil to tell which of his babes he was the fondest of.

[*Exit, R.*]

SCENE V.—*A Dungeon—lights down.*

BURIDAN discovered, bound to a pillar, R. C.

Bur. One of the men who conducted me hither squeezed me by the hand as I entered; but supposing 'twas sincere, what can he do for me? bring me bread a little whiter, water a little fresher, and a priest before I die. Madman that I was—I know mankind, I know their honour brittle as the glass, melting as snow when warmed by the soft breath of woman and I have hung

my life on such a thread. But I may escape—it is yet possible—one star yet burns—it is the star of hope in the dark firmament above. The door opens—who can it be?

Enter LANDRY, L. U. E., with the pitcher.

Lan. I have brought you wine, captain. Where are you?

Bur. Here. 'Tis the voice of Landri.

Lan. [*Advancing, c.*] To be sure it is.

Bur. Canst thou save me?

Lan. I'm afraid not.

Bur. Canst thou furnish me with the means to write?

Lan. No, I can't.

Bur. Canst thou thrust thy hand into my pocket, and take from it a purse of gold?

Lan. [*Taking the purse from Buridan's pocket.*] I think I can.

Bur. Approach and do it—this pocket.

Lan. And what now, captain?

Bur. See what is in it.

Lan. Three marks of gold.

Bur. A hundred and sixty-five pounds—'twould take thee eight-and-twenty years to earn as much. Swear on your soul to do what I require, and that purse is your own; it is all that I possess—had I more I would bestow it on thee.

Lan. Well, and what would you further do?

Bur. If I am hung, which is likely enough, the executioner will take care of my burial; if I escape, which is not impossible, thou shalt have four times that sum, and I a thousand.

Lan. But what's to be done?

Bur. Quit the prison, haste to the tavern of Piere de Bourges; there I lodged; ask for the chamber of the captain, and when once there, count the stones from the corner where stands the crucifix; on the seventh you will see marked a cross, raise it with your poniard, and you will find a small iron box, of which the key is in that purse; you may open it to make sure that it contains papers, and not gold; and then to-morrow—if before the entrance of the king you do not see me safe and sound—if I say not to you give back that box and key, you will give both to Louis, King of Navarre. I shall be dead, but I shall be avenged: there, that is all—my soul will be at peace, and to you I shall owe it.

Lan. You may rely on me.

Bur. On your salvation promise to do this.

Lan. By my hopes of heaven I do.

Bur. Go, Landri, be honest if you can.

Lan. Well, to oblige you, sir, I'll see what I can do ; but I don't think it hardly possible. [Exit, L. U. E.]

Bur. Now, welcome cord and welcome executioner : vengeance sits smiling underneath the gibbet—a word akin to day sublime, when breathed from living mouths and beating hearts, and mine shall reach thee, Margaret, in thy pride of place, a glorious revenge, the vengeance of the dead.

Enter QUEEN MARGARET and ORSINI, with a lamp, L. U. E.
—lamps up.

Mar. Is he bound so fast?—I can with safety approach him?

Ors. Yes, madam.

Mar. Put down the lamp and leave me, but at the slightest sound return.

[Orsini puts the lamp on a stone, L. C., and exit, L. U. E.]

Bur. A light—some one approaches.

Mar. Ay ; did you not expect to see some one ?

Bur. I hoped, but scarce expected it. But thou hast said no, he shall not die till I've duly enjoyed my triumph ; and he well knows who it is that strikes the blow : yes, yes, you are right—I did, indeed, expect you.

Mar. You have humbled me to fear, and once when I have feared, I never can forgive. Thy measures were well taken ; but you forgot you had to deal with Margaret of Bourgoyne. *[Taking the paper from her bosom.]* There is the valued page that was to crush me—a brother's last farewell to another brother. Look at it by the rays of the lamp—see thy last hope perish. *[Burns it.]* Now have I not full freedom to work my will upon thee ?

Bur. What wouldst thou ?

Mar. Thou art supposed to be the murderer of Philip d'Aulnay ; and what is done with murderers ?

Bur. But first I must be judged by a tribunal.

Mar. Art thou mad?—With secrets such as thou possess, and talk of a tribunal. No, when a man so dangerous as thee is once arrested, he is placed in such a cell as this, and bound as thou art bound ; and at mid-

night comes a ruffian and a priest; the priest comes first, and when the priest is gone, the ruffian comes; and next day, when the gaoler opes the door, he quick returns in terror, and says the prisoner, to escape a public execution, died by his own hands, even by strangulation. These dungeon walls can stifle groans, extinguish sighs, and absorb the tumult of a dying agony.

Bur. Good—we speak with equal frankness: I told you my projects, and now you tell me your's.

Mar. Ah, thou wouldst jibe and jest, but thy heart is sad within—I read it in thy face, and thou canst not. Hast thou aught more to say?

Bur. Yes, one thing more.

Mar. Say on.

Bur. A recollection of my youth I would recount to thee: 'twas twenty years ago, in 1293, when Burgundy was happy, for then Duke Robert, the second of that name, reigned over the land. [*She starts.*] Do not interrupt me—I only ask ten minutes. Duke Robert had a daughter, young and handsome—the envelope of an angel, with a demon's soul. [*She starts again.*] Let me go on: Duke Robert had a page—he, too, was young and handsome, with a warm and candid heart—he was called Lyonnet of Bourmonville. [*She starts.*] I think you listen with still more attention. The page and this young girl soon loved each other——

Mar. Where will this story lead?

Bur. You soon shall hear—it is a little strange: the page and the young girl, then, loved each other, unknown to all the world—till, one day, the Duke's daughter announced to the page that she was shortly to become a mother——

Bur. Great heaven!

Bur. Aid me to change from this position, Margaret—'tis somewhat painful. [*She cuts the cords.*] Thankye. Where was I, Margaret?

Mar. Where she was about to become a mother.

Bur. Ay, so I was. In eight days more, the secret was no longer one—until her father, the Duke, announced to his daughter that the next day a convent's gates should open, and, like those of the dark tomb, upon her close for ever. Night re-united the lovers—oh, 'twas a dreadful night! a night of sobs and imprecations— young Margaret promised then to be—what she has since become.

Mar. And then, and then——

Bur. These cords eat into my flesh, and pain me much—remove them, Margaret. [*She cuts the cord, R., and returns to L. C.*] She bore a poignard there, as you now bear one; and she said, “Lyonnet, Lyonnet, if now, before to-morrow, my father were to die before the morning, we should hear no more of convent, no more of separation—’twould then be only love.” I know not how it happened, but the poignard passed from her hands to those of Lyonnet—an arm seized his, and led him through the darkness, as through the windings of eternal hell—it raised a curtain, and the armed page and sleeping duke were opposite each other. It was a noble head, that sleeping duke’s—calm, beautiful, sublime—the assassin often since has beheld it in his dreams, for the base wretch he slew him. But Margaret, the young and lovely Margaret,—she did not grace a convent—she became Queen of Navarre, and then of France—the page received next day, by the hands of one Orsini, a letter, and much gold, and a supplication he would depart from her for ever.

Mar. Imprudent woman!

Bur. She was imprudent, was she not? For that letter was in her own hand-writing, and detailed the crime in all its complex horrors. Margaret the Queen would not have acted differently from that weak girl.

Mar. Well, Lyonnet returned not—doubtless he is dead, and the letter lost. What has the history of Margaret of France in common with that young girl?

[*She approaches, and begins to recognise him.*]

Bur. Lyonnet de Bournonville is not dead—you know he is not, or why do you shudder as you recognise him?

Mar. And the letter?

Bur. That letter will be the first placed in the hand of Louis, King of France, on his entry into Paris.

Mar. You say this but to make me tremble, or at the first you would have used this weapon.

Bur. But I judged better; I reserved it for a second purpose. Did I not well, Queen Margaret?

Mar. But the letter?

Bur. To-morrow, your husband will restore it. Margaret, you told me of the fate of murderers: know’st thou that which waits on parricides and adulteresses? Listen, Margaret: their hair is severed first with burning scissors—their bosoms, living, are torn open, and the warm heart snatched forth—’tis burned, and the ashes

scattered to the winds, and, three days afterwards, the carcass, on a hurdle, is through the city trailed.

Mar. Mercy ! mercy !

Bur. Another service, Margaret—release these chains. [*She unbinds him—he rises and comes down, R.*] Oh, it is pleasant to be free ! Why, what ails thee ? To-morrow, through the city, will be cried, Buridan, the murderer, is dead—strangled himself in prison ! Another cry will answer it from the Louvre—Margaret of Burgundy is condemned to the punishment of murderesses and adulteresses !

Mar. Mercy, Buridan ! mercy !

Bur. I am no longer Buridan, but Lyonnet de Bournonville, the page of Margaret, the assassin of Duke Robert.

Mar. Speak not so loud.

Bur. Why, what hast thou to fear ?

Mar. What, oh ! what dost thou desire ?

Bur. To-morrow you will enter into Paris, at the right hand of the king—I will be upon his left ; together will we go to meet him.

Mar. We will do so.

Bur. 'Tis well.

Mar. But then the letter——

Bur. Well, when it is presented, I will take it—for I shall be first minister.

Mar. Marigny is not dead.

Bur. Did you not swear, at ten to-day he should die.

Mar. Then I have yet an hour—my promise still shall be fulfilled.

Bur. One question more : what has become of the children of Margaret of Burgundy and Lyonnet de Bournonville ?

Mar. They are entrusted to a man.

Bur. What man ?

Mar. I do not recollect his name.

Bur. You must.

Mar. I think it was Orsini.

Bur. [*Aloud.*] Orsini ! Orsini !

Mar. What wouldst thou do ?

Bur. Is he not there ?

Mar. No

[*Goes up, L.*

[*Crosses, R.*

Enter ORSINI, L.

Bur. Ah ! but he is there. Approach : to-morrow I'm

first minister. Tell him, good madam, that he may believe it.

Mar. It is so.

Bur. And the first act of my power shall be, upon the rack to question one Orsini, who was formerly in the service of Robert, Duke of Normandy.

Ors. Why, my good lord—why?

Bur. To know how he accomplished the orders he received from Margaret of Burgundy, as to two infants.

Ors. Pardon, my lord! mercy! I could not kill them, my hand so trembled.

Bur. What did you with them?

Ors. I gave them to another to expose, and say that they were dead.

Bur. And that man's name was——

Ors. Landri.

Bur. Orsini, thou hast yet a heart, a soul, and art a man; and for this deed shall have their weight in gold. You see the Queen has taken pity on me.

Ors. What now remains to do, my lord?

Bur. Take yonder lamp, and light the way, while the Queen leans on my arm.

Mar. Where go you?

Bur. To a royal meeting with Louis X., on his entry into Paris. Come, madam.

[*Exeunt, I. U. E., arm-in-arm, followed by Orsini.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Louvre—large folding-doors, C. F.—two doors, R.—a door and window, L.*

Enter the KING—trumpets—BURIDAN, R., as Minister—and QUEEN MARGARET, L.—SAVOISY, ROUAL, and Populace, C. D. F.

Savoisy and Populace. [Shouting.] Long live the King! King. Thanks, thanks! My heart re-echoes your's with gratitude. In your happiness, I seek my own.

Bur. [To the Queen.] Remember our agreement; between us the power—between us the kingdom of France.

Mar. From this day you take your seat with us in council.

King. Now to perform the customary salutations.

[*Nobles, &c., kiss the King's hand.*]

Enter GAULTIER D'AULNAY, L.

Gau. [*Rushing forward to c.*] The Queen! I was told the Queen was here!

Mar. Gaultier, command yourself. [*Aside.*] I love you—only you.

Gau. Buridon here!

Mar. Madman, silence!

Enter LANDRI, R.

Bur. (R.) [*Aside.*] Landri here!

Lan. Captain——

Bur. You see.

Lan. I do.

Bur. The box?

Lan. [*Showing the iron box.*] The box is here; but where's the twelve marks of gold?

Bur. I'll bring them to you this evening.

Lan. Where?

Bur. At my old lodgings at Pierre de Bourgeois.

Lan. You shall have the box.

Bur. I have many things to ask you.

Lan. There isn't a better-informed fellow than myself in the world.

[*Exit, R.—Flourish—Exeunt King, Queen, Buridan, Guards, and Ladies, C. D. F.*]

Sav. [*Sitting down in the King's chair.*] I shall sit down; I am positively quite enchanted with the affairs. But how the devil—you'll pardon my making use of a naughty expression—how is all this to end?

Rou. Possibly Gaultier may know—ask him.

Gau. Ask of me nothing, for I know nothing.

Sav. Blesh me, what supernatural ignorance!

Enter Captain of the Guard, C. D. F.

Captain. [*Giving a paper to Roual.*] An order from the King, sir. [*Exit, R.*]

Rou. An order for the death of Enguerrand de Marigny. 'Tis a melancholy office, but I must obey. [*Exit, L.*]

Sav. A most distressing situation, upon my thor!

Re-enter Captain of the Guard, with papers, R.

Captain. Letters from the King to the Count Savoisy.

[*Exit, R.—The Courtiers crowd around Savoisy.*]

Sav. What is it? A captain's commission in the Royal Guards—I did not know there was a vacancy. And here, inclosed, is another for Gaultier d'Aulnay. Letters patent from the King.

Gau. Letters patent from the King, giving to d'Aulnay the supreme command in the province of Champagne, with orders to quit Paris to-morrow—I quit Paris!

Sav. Sir, we congratulate you.

Gau. Congratulate the devil, sir! [*Tears the order.*] I will not depart; you may, my lords.

Sav. And so we will, my lord; I see there is mischief brewing—I mean nothing personal; but there is such a person as number one, which I mean to take care of—upon my soul, I do. [*Exeunt Savoisie and Courtiers, R.*]

Gau. Depart—quit Paris! oh, never!

Enter QUEEN MARGARET, C.

Mar. Gaultier.

Gau. Is it you, your Majesty?

Mar. Silence.

Gau. Has been preserved too long. Am I a child, a puppet? Yesterday you swore that naught should separate us; to-day, am I ordered to quit Paris.

Mar. The order of the King.

Gau. I have torn it to atoms. Had the order your sanction?

Mar. I was forced to accede.

Gau. Who can force the Queen?

Mar. A villain. Wait till to-morrow, and I will explain all.

Gau. And on that assurance you wish me to withdraw: on my return, I'll have an explanation.

Mar. You shall.

Gau. Margaret of Burgundy, remember your promise. [*He rushes out, L.*]

Mar. 'Twas time, indeed, that he departed.

Enter BURIDON, C. D. F.

Bur. [*Coming down, L.*] Pardon me, Margaret, if I shorten your farewell.

Mar. You have not rightly seen, good Buridon.

Bur. Was not that Gaultier you parted with?

Mar. Then you have not heard; he did not say farewell.

Bur. How so?

Mar. Because he is not going

Bur. The King decrees it.

Mar. And the Queen forbids it.

Bur. Have you forgotten our compact?

Mar. I promised to make you minister, and you to leave me Gaultier; and now you require his absence.

Bur. Did we not agree, between us two the power—between us two the sceptre: a third would mar this good association.

Mar. It must be, notwithstanding

Bur. You are in my power.

Mar. Yesterday, thou wert a captain—to-day, the King's first minister. You frown, but I fear it not: thou hast climbed, and hast too far to fall down the abyss, to drag me with thee, or pull another down.

Bur. You love him tenderly?

Mar. Better than life.

Bur. Dwells love within thy heart? Then thou art better than I thought thee.

Mar. If it be not love, call it some other weakness; but let him not go.

Bur. [*Aside.*] They would be two to one against me—I dare not trust the odds.

Mar. What say you?

Bur. [*Aside.*] Unless I ruin them, myself am lost. Thou wouldst not have him go?

Mar. Not for worlds!

Bur. To ask thee his departure is a sacrifice—perhaps, in return, I'd make thee one thou'dst little dream of: those letters, to which I owe all that I am—which constitutes my power o'er thee—those letters, in an interview when all the stolen fires of the presumptuous and young princess should be renewed—for such a boon wouldst thou not give them up?

Mar. I could not receive thee here.

Bur. Thou canst go where thou wilt.

Mar. To meet thee elsewhere, would be my ruin.

Bur. The Tower of Nesle——

Mar. [*Exultingly.*] Wilt thou meet me there?

Bur. I went there once, not knowing what awaited me.

Mar. [*Aside.*] He is my victim. Think not that such an interview were any thing but bliss to me.

Bur. Shall Gaultier go to-morrow?

Mar. I'll tell thee that to-night. Here is the key of

the Tower of Nesle—begone. [*Aside.*] Now, Buridon, thou wilt not escape me.

Bur. [*Aside, going.*] Margaret, this is the key of thine own tomb. [*Exit, C. D. F.*]

Mar. [*Calling.*] Orsini, Orsini !

Enter ORSINI, L.

Ors. Your majesty——

Mar. Have with you at the Tower of Nesle four armed ruffians.

Ors. What else ?

Mar. More of this when I come. [*Exit Orsini, L.*] No one has seen us, and it is well. [*Exit, R.*]

Enter BURIDAN, with a parchment in his hand, from another door, R.

Bur. Count Savoisie !

Enter SAVOISY, L.

Sav. Your pleasure ?

Bur. The King has heard with anguish of the numerous massacres that desolate his good city of Paris. He has good reason to suppose that a band of ruffians meet at the Tower of Nesle this evening at nine o'clock : you will repair thither with armed men, and arrest all that you may find, whatever be their rank and title. Here is the order.

Sav. [*Going.*] I shall obey—I know my duty.

Bur. And you may say, this is one of the most important you ever have fulfilled.

[*Exeunt, Savoisie, L., Buridan, R.*]

SCENE II.—*Interior of the Tavern of Pierre de Bourgeois.*

Enter LANDRI, R.

Lan. Twelve golden marks—six hundred and eighteen pounds—a good job this. I shall, if times continue to flourish after this good fashion, become a gentleman. Well, in these days a man must be doing something, or take lodgings in the city poor-house. I think, now, I'll raise a troop of horse, and quarter them on the citizens, and receive their pay for my own pocket. A delicate design. Yes ; I'll serve with his most Christian Majesty, and make it up with my conscience thus : provided one's

Christian duties are faithfully accomplished, by occasionally burning a gipsy or cutting off the beard of a Jew, one's salvation comes as naturally as a glass of wine. Oh, here is the Captain!

Enter BURIDAN, L.

Bur. 'Tis well, Landri.

Lan. You see, Captain, I've been waiting for you.

Bur. And you occupy the interval in drinking.

Lan. The truth is, Captain, I'm fond of the bottle.

Bur. And the gold, I believe, that buys it.

Lan. [*Giving the box.*] There is your box, Captain.

Bur. I have an appointment with a young man; as soon as you see him, go out: return—I have something to say to you.

Lan. I hear him on the staircase.

Bur. Leave me.

Lan. I will.

Gau. [*At the door.*] Is Captain Buridon within?

Lan. [*Opening the door.*] You'll find him there, sir.

[*Exit, L. U. E.*]

Enter GAULTIER D'AULNAY, C. D. F.

Bur. I thought, Sir Gaultier, you were aware of my new title—I was deceived. This morning, in the King's presence, I was called Lyonnet de Bournonville, his majesty's prime minister.

Gau. I think not of your title and your name, sir—I come here, sir, and summon you to fulfil your promise.

Bur. I promised to acquaint you with the murderer of your brother.

Gau. It is not that; you promised something else.

Bur. I promised to acquaint you how Engurrand de Marigny passed from the palace of the Louvre to the gibbet of Mont Faircon.

Gau. [*Impatiently.*] It is not that—not that, sir.

Bur. Wouldst learn how he whom you arrested yesterday is minister?

Gau. Not I, sir; you promised something else.

Bur. Explain yourself.

Gau. That I should see the Queen.

Bur. And thus your love for her stifles all other feelings. Fraternal love is henceforth but a name. Oh, thou'st far gone in madness.

Gau. You have promised I should see the Queen.

Bur. And hast thou need of me for that?—Canst thou

not find the secret entrance to her night alcove? or dost thou dread that this is the last?—The queen returns not to the Louvre.

Gau. Who told thee that?

Bur. The man with whom the Queen passed all the night.

Gau. [*Putting his hand on his sword.*] Thou'rt mad.

Bur. Calm thee, good Gaultier, calm thee; leave not thus thy sword within its scabbard. Oh, she is a fond and passionate woman, Margaret; what did she tell thee when thou askest her touching the wound upon her face?

Gau. Eternal heavens, pity my sufferings!

Bur. Doubtless, she wrote to you.

Gau. What matters it to thee?

Bur. With what a fond and ardent style she paints her love. [*Goes to the table, R. C.*]

Gau. Thy fiendish eye has never seen her writing.

Bur. [*Opening the box, and taking out a letter.*] Perhaps thou wilt recognise it. There, learn a little of your beloved one's history.

Gau. 'Tis a deceit of hell.

Bur. Is it not sweet to languish by her side, and pass one's hand through the long golden tresses that wander lovely down her ivory neck, and in a moment of ecstatic rapture to cut off one like this? [*Showing a lock of hair.*]

Gau. [*Snatching the letter and hair.*] Her writing, and the very colour of her hair. But you may have stolen that letter, and cut that lock away by foul surprise.

Bur. Ask her thyself—I promised thee that thou shouldst see her.

Gau. But now.

Bur. She may not now be to the appointment.

Gau. An appointment, and with——show me the man, that I may shed his blood.

Bur. Suppose he gave his place to thee.

Gau. To me?

Bur. Ay, give her up, and yield her unto you.

Gau. Oh, curse on't.

Bur. But Margaret waits—would you have her wait, good Gaultier?

Gau. Where does she wait?

Bur. At the Tower of Nesle.

Gau. [*Rushing out.*] Enough.

Bur. You have forgot the key.

Gau. [*Returning.*] Give me the key.

Bur. [*Giving it.*] One other word.

Gau. Be brief.

Bur. 'Twas Margaret of Burgundy that slew thy brother.

Gau. Damnation !

[*Rushes out, L. S. E.*]

Bur. 'Tis night ; go thou and join her, 'tis as it should be. If Savoyis be as exact as they, he will make strange prisoners. One thing remains for me alone to know—the fate of those two children. Oh, I should love them tenderly. It shall go hard but even from cunning Landri I'll extort the secret. He is here.

Enter LANDRI, D. F.

Lan. I think you said you had something more to say to me, captain ?

Bur. How long will it take that youth to go from hence to the Tower of Nesle ?

Lan. Why, as he won't be able to hire a boat, he must go up by the bridge, and that will take him half an hour.

Bur. Place a glass upon the table, I wish to talk of our adventures, Landri—our wars in Italy ; take thou a cup, and sit beside me.

Lan. Ah, those were jolly days and stirring nights ; all the day we were breaking the heads of our fellow-creatures, and all the night we were drinking.

Bur. Ay, and in the other world our sins will be placed on one side, and our good deeds on another ; and I dare say you have enough of the latter to kick the beam in your favour. But I would speak to thee of certain children—two children that Orsini——

Lan. Ay, I remember, two pretty babes ; which of the two do you think is the greatest villain, Orsini or myself ?—Ah, I see you can't tell, and I won't puzzle you. But to the babes—Orsini told me to hang a grindstone round their necks and throw them into the water ; but somehow or other, when I came to the water with the sleeping children in my arms, one of them woke, chilled by the cold night-wind, and cried so bitterly, that my heart melted, and I cried too. I looked like a fool, I dare say, for I saved their lives ; but I felt—oh, I felt like an honest man.

Bur. What didst thou with them, then ?

Lan. I exposed them on the steps of Notre Dame, where thousands have been exposed before.

Bur. Know'st thou what became of them?

Lan. Some one took care of them, I'm sure, for when I returned they were not there.

Bur. Didst mark them with any sign by which to recognise them!

Lan. Oh, yes, poor things, I have, though they didn't much like it. I made them each a cross with my poniard on the shoulders.

Bur. A red cross on the left shoulder! say that it was not a red cross—say that it was not upon the left arm—say any other sign.

Lan. I tell you it was a red cross, and nothing else—upon the left arm, and no where else.

Bur. [*Starting up.*] Woe, woe, my wretched children! one dead, another just about to die; one by her hands, the other by my own. Landri, where can we get a boat so as to arrive before him?

Lan. Of a neighbour of mine—a fisherman.

Bur. A step—a ladder—a sword, and follow me.

Lan. Where, captain?

Bur. To the Tower of Nesle.

[*Exeunt, D. F.*]

SCENE III.—*The Chamber of Death in the Tower of Nesle.*

Enter QUEEN MARGARET and ORSINI, R.

Mar. Understand me, Orsini, this is thy last work of death; necessity commands it, and we must obey.

Ors. But for the last time, lady. Oh, remember.

Mar. For the last time, and I will remember. While Buridan lives I am not queen, nor the mistress even of my life. He knows our secrets, our nightly massacres, and Buridan must die.

Ors. He must, or we; and he shall die. By which way will we enter?

Mar. [*Pointing to L. D.*] Up that staircase.

Ors. But mark ye, this is to be the last.

Mar. It shall—I swear it.

Ors. Where shall I place my men?

Mar. Hush! I thought I heard below the dipping of an oar in the river.

Ors. [*Looking out at the window, c. r.*] A boat with two men!

Mar. One of those men is he—there is no time to lose,

so shut the door on the outer side ; take away the key—let him not come to me—I cannot see him die—away !

[*Exit Orsini, L. D.—Buridan appears at the window, C. F.*

Bur. Margaret !

Mar. Help ! help !

Bur. [*Jumping in at the window, and advancing, R.*] Have thou no fear.

Mar. Why come you by the window, and not the door ?

Bur. No matter ; I have that to say that every moment of lost time is as a treasure thrown into the ocean.

Mar. Come you to extort some new condition ?

Bur. No, no ; thou hast naught to fear ; thou might'st sleep in peace upon my tomb : I do not come to threaten, but to tell thee what days of happinees are yet in store for us.

Mar. I do not understand you.

Bur. Margaret, is there no sentiment about thy heart ? no feeling that reminds thee thou wert once a mother ?

Mar. What dost thou mean ?

Bur. Is she I knew so pure, now close and impenetrable to all the feelings that man and heaven hold sacred ?

Mar. And is it thou who talk to me of feelings ?—Thou, thou pestilence !

Bur. It matters little by what name you call me. Forget all that has passed between us within the last three days—remember only the confidence you once reposed in me, and say is there no sentiment within thy soul thou wouldst repose upon another ?

Mar. There is—I am thy accomplice—thou art mine. Oh, had not love for thee first blunted the affections of my soul, my first most damning crime had never been acted. To hide my share in my father's death, I abandoned both my children ; to stifle this and the loss of thee, I flew to pleasure. Oh, horrible ! a name misnamed where joy is agony and is not joy. No friendly voice called back the queen to reason, for few are the friends of the great ; and they seemed all leagued in one fell dark conspiracy to send my soul to hell, and when I whispered to myself I will repent, dark spirits sat like lead upon my heart, and demons flapped their sable wings, and with their breaths of fire yelled in my tortured ear, Margaret of Burgundy, despair, despair !

Bur. But tell me, had your children still been with you ?

Mar. But they were not near me, to save me from their contaminating horrors.

Bur. But they were near thee ; one of them, wretched man, you saw imploring at your feet, imploring for the life you had imparted. The murderer's dagger gleamed above his head, and you said strike.

Mar. Where, where could it be ?

Bur. Upon the very spot on which we stand.

Mar. Philippe d'Aulnay, I am struck by heaven.

Bur. Thou know'st the fate of one, and for the other—

Mar. Gaultier—

Bur. His mother's lover !

Mar. No ; of that we are both innocent, and I can call him son.

Bur. Speak you the truth ?

Mar. Yes ; in this black abyss kind heaven has stepped between us.

Bur. Now, Margaret, is Buridan a foe ?

Mar. No ; for thou art Gaultier's father.

Bur. Thou seest we may yet be happy ; one thing alone is wanting to our bliss.

Mar. Gaultier ?

Bur. He will soon be here.

Mar. Here ! here !

Bur. I have confided to him the key, and he will come by yonder staircase.

Mar. Horror !—On those stairs are placed a group of murderers. [*A cry is heard, L.*] And it is him they murder !

Bur. Let us rush to aid him !

[*They rush to the door, L, but cannot open it.*]

Mar. 'Tis closed. [*Calling.*] Strike not, Orsini ! strike not, Orsini !

Bur. Open, thou door of hell !—My son ! my son !

[*Music.—The door opens.*]

Enter GAULTIER D'AULNAY, desperately wounded.

Gau. [*Holding the key.*] Margaret, I bring the key of the tower to thee.

Mar. Wretched youth, I am thy mother !

Gau. My mother ! take my last curse ! [*Dies.*]

Bur. Demon of blood, thou hast destroyed the only hope that heaven had left us ! thou hast slain my boy—would have slain me—I loathe and I abhor thee ! farewell for ever.

Mar. Mercy ! mercy !

Bur. Mercy ! look there, I would have pardoned all but this ; and so, farewell, Margaret of Burgundy—I leave thee to thy doom.

[She clings to him—he throws her from him, and is rushing out, L., when he is met by the King, Savois, Landri in chains, Guards, and Nobles.]

King. Monsters ! thy hour is come—the hour of justice.

Bur. And it is true ; together were we criminals, together let us make expiation.

Mar. *[Approaching him.]* Stay—one word of kindness. *[She snatches a dagger from her girdle.]* Thus will Margaret die ! *[A Guard seizes her hand.]*

Bur. Ah, is it so ? then thus——

[He rushes to the door, L., with his sword drawn—it is struck out of his hand, and the Guards point their spears to his breast.]

King. To the scaffold with the murderers of the Tower of Nesle. *[Tableau.]*

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<i>R.]</i>			<i>KING.</i>
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			<i>[L.]</i>

THE END.

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